

When Seniors Say “No!”



**overcoming
resistance to assistance**

About Home Instead Senior Care

The Home Instead Senior Care network is one of the world's largest providers of non-medical home care and companionship services for seniors, with more than 900 independently owned and operated franchises in Australia, the United States, Canada, Japan, Portugal, Ireland, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Taiwan, Italy, Switzerland, Germany, South Korea, Finland, Austria, Puerto Rico and the Netherlands.

Our non-medical services include companionship, personal care (assistance with showering and dressing), meal preparation, medication reminders, light house cleaning and transportation for appointments, errands and shopping.

Services are available at home or in care facilities from a few hours a week up to 24 hour care, seven days a week, including public holidays. Family members can't always be there for senior parents and relatives, so Home Instead CAREGivers are the next best thing.

The Home Instead Senior Care network's 60,000+ CAREGivers complete a multi-phased safety and caregiving education program. They are screened, trained, insured and have successfully passed through reference and criminal background checks. The training program features case studies, senior illness information, stimulating activities, nutritional recipes and tips for coping with stress. In addition, Home Instead Senior Care offers an industry-leading Alzheimer's training program to CAREGivers, the first of its kind in Australia for non-medical caregivers.

** Research references in this booklet are taken from studies conducted by Home Instead Senior Care in Australian and international markets.*

Growing older, making choices

In Australia, an older person is faced with many choices. Choices such as where and how to live as they age. While many seniors will actively choose to continue residing in the comfort of their own home, many others will put off decisions until a crisis emerges. The desire to remain independent and maintain their quality of life is often at the heart of these decisions with over 90% of seniors wishing to remain in their own home.

However, the reality is that growing older means:

- Everyday tasks may become more and more difficult
- Increased frailty and safety risks
- Increased stress on family members worried about the health and safety of their older relative and not being available to help them.

Despite this, many seniors will firmly resist offers of help.

They are the primary decision makers about their needs but asking for help is not easy for many of them. However, if clear choices about how to stay at home and get help become the subjects of everyday conversation, the benefits of remaining healthy and independent can be enjoyed by all the family members of an ageing person.

- *Perhaps you are an older person who is living at home thinking maybe you might need a little extra help from time to time?*
- *Or perhaps you are caring for an older relative or friend who is determined to stay living in their own home.*

The choice to stay at home needs to be supported by many other decisions such as: how to stay active, how to exercise both the mind and body, how to maintain a healthy, well balanced diet and planning how these things will be achieved.

It's important to plan for who and what will help you to maintain your independence.



Help(not)wanted

More than half (52%) of family members presently caring for an older relative started doing so because the senior relative had an injury, illness or medical condition that left them less able to function independently. However, there are other issues, such as depression, poor nutrition, death of a spouse, isolation or loneliness that can further compromise an older person's physical and mental health in just a short period of time.

Many seniors will refuse help let alone ask for it. Often they fear becoming a burden to their families or losing their independence. So, it is important that their caregivers, adult children or other family members look for signs that may indicate some assistance is required in their loved one's everyday lives.



So how can you tell if your senior loved one needs some extra help?

Home Instead Senior Care has compiled some tips and ideas to help you overcome resistance to care.

Wondering if you might be overreacting?

The 10 most common situations prompting family members to provide a senior with additional assistance:

1. An injury, illness or medical condition left the senior less able to function independently
2. Advanced age made the senior less able to function independently
3. The family noticed the senior was becoming burdened by everyday tasks
4. The senior person asked for help directly
5. The family member would feel guilty if they didn't offer to help out
6. The senior needed more assistance after the death of a spouse or partner
7. The senior would have had to move or leave their home if some assistance was not provided
8. The family noticed the senior was losing interest in some of the activities they used to enjoy
9. Family members noticed the senior was losing weight
10. Family members noticed the senior's appearance was deteriorating



Warning Bells

10 signs a senior needs help

1. Unpaid bills piling up - Seniors can feel overwhelmed by the simple task of opening and responding to daily mail, particularly if their eye sight is deteriorating or if this was once the responsibility of a now deceased spouse. This can result in overdue bills, bounced cheques and potential utility disconnection due to lack of payment and other creditor issues.

2. Reluctance to leave the house - Rather than ask for help, seniors who are having trouble, e.g. walking, remembering directions, seeing or hearing, will slowly pull away from their community and friends and isolate themselves. If left unresolved, this isolation can lead to loneliness and depression, as well as malnutrition and other health issues.

3. Losing interest in preparing or eating meals - Seniors who suddenly find themselves alone, who have become lonely over time or are easily overwhelmed by cooking, tend not to eat properly. Signs that poor eating habits are forming include: improper selection of food in the house (not well-balanced), expired or rotten food in the refrigerator or signs of excessive weight loss (clothes much looser). An ageing person may eat enough calories to get by, but may suffer nutritionally, including increased cholesterol and low vitamin intake.

4. Declining personal hygiene - Changes in appearance are the most obvious sign that some assistance is needed. These signs can range from unkempt hair and body odour, to unshaven faces, wearing clothes that are dirty, unchanged for days or inappropriate for the weather. These changes may occur because doing the laundry or getting in and out of the shower has become too physically challenging. Many who live alone also fear slipping and falling in a shower or bath with no one to help him or her get up.

5. Declining driving skills - Look for evidence of parking or speeding tickets, dents and scratches on the senior's car - these may be signs of deteriorating driving skills. Decreased ability to see, poor sense of direction, inability to merge in traffic, driving way under the speed limit and very slow reaction times may indicate help is needed.

6. Signs of burnt pots and pans - This may be a sign of short-term memory loss or even the onset of Alzheimer's disease, as pots used in cooking are forgotten on the stove and burn. Besides the danger of falls, fire is probably one of the greatest safety concerns families of older relatives face.

7. Symptoms of depression - Depression causes marked changes in behaviour and one's daily routine over time. Many seniors feel isolated, or like prisoners in their own home, particularly if a health condition or the deaths of friends or family members keeps them from going to the places they once enjoyed. Feelings of hopelessness or despair, increased listlessness, and not wanting to get dressed can all be indications of a problem. Other signs include decreased visits with family members and friends, change in sleeping patterns (sleeping for long periods or not sleeping at all) and lack of interest in usual hobbies and activities.

8. Missed doctors' appointments and social engagements - While this can be a symptom of increased forgetfulness, it is often simply a result of not having transportation and not knowing how to access transportation options on their own.

9. Untidy house - Changes in housekeeping may occur simply because it is too difficult or tiring. This is especially troubling if a parent used to keep the house neat and orderly or if a now-deceased spouse was responsible for these duties. From dirty laundry to dirty dishes, these everyday tasks become too much to handle on their own.

10. Losing track of medications - Missed doses and medication mistakes (overdosing and running out of pills before the next prescription can be refilled) can lead to serious medical complications. Some seniors take multiple prescriptions, which can be overwhelming without assistance and reminders.



Resistance to Assistance

Many seniors do not ask for help - They fear they will be a burden to their families or lose their independence.

Six strategies to overcome resistance to care:

- 1. Understand where the resistance is coming from.** Ask your parent or loved one why he or she is resisting. “Mum, I notice that every time I bring up the idea of someone coming in to help, you resist it. Why is that?” Often older adults don’t realise they are being resistant.
- 2. Explain your goals.** Remind your loved one that you both want the same thing. Explain that a little extra help can keep them at home longer and will help put your mind at ease as well. Have a candid conversation with them about the impact this care is having on your life. Often seniors don’t understand the time commitment of a caregiver. If a family member is stretched thin with their caregiving duties, sometimes he or she just needs to ask the senior to do things to make his/her life easier as a favour, which includes having an additional caregiver step in to help out. Use the phrase, “I would feel so much better if I knew that you had more help, someone to do your food shopping, someone to take you to the chemist, someone to be here when I can’t, etc...”
- 3. Bring in outside help.** If a relationship with a parent is deteriorating, ask a professional, such as an aged care professional, for an assessment. A third-party professional can provide valuable input. You can visit homeinstead.com.au/resources/ for tips on how to talk with a loved one. If you are having problems getting through to your older adult, consider asking another family member or close friend to intervene. If you’re not making headway, perhaps there’s someone better to talk with them.

4. Research your options. To find the best resources for your loved one visit agedcareaustralia.gov.au to research resources in your community or go to homeinstead.com.au and click on the resources tab. If you decide outside help is needed, reassure your parents and tell them you have researched caregivers and you are confident you have found the best one you can find to come into the home to help.

5. Explain how a service will make it possible to remain independent longer in his or her own home. Most professional caregiving services provide free consultation to assess the senior’s specific situation and make recommendations. If your senior continues to show signs of problems (e.g. burning pots, missing doses of important medication or falling at home) use these events as a time to discuss your safety concerns and suggest additional assistance options.

6. Respect your parent’s decisions. Sometimes you won’t agree with your parent’s decisions - that’s O.K. As long as your loved one is of sound mind, he or she should have the final say. Involve the senior in the planning for their care. Don’t make unilateral decisions unless the senior really does not have the mental capacity (e.g. Alzheimer’s) to participate in his/her own lifestyle decisions. If the senior is still resistant, but is a danger to himself/herself, consult a lawyer about taking steps for becoming a guardian and having an enduring power of attorney so that you can make decisions on their behalf.

A note: If your senior has dementia, seek professional assistance from a doctor or aged care professional. Reasoned discussion will not work & other strategies must be employed.



Help Yourself so you can help Them

"I am trying to help Mum on my own. I think I'm doing a good job and I don't want to burden anyone else with this, but seriously, there are times when I could really use some help..."



Often caregiving is a family responsibility. But sometimes if a spouse is not available or able to be the caregiver, the primary caregiving responsibilities, for one or both parents, tends to fall on just one family member (usually the eldest, adult daughter or the adult child that lives the closest to the senior). The number of people providing care in Australia is staggering. In 2010 there were 2.87 million carers. This represents 13.1% of the population.

According to a Home Instead Senior Care survey many carers (72%) provide the care without any outside help. However, 31% admit they'd like more help with caregiving, and one in four resent other family members who don't help out.

If you are a sole caregiver it's important you avoid burning out. You must take care of your health or you won't be any good to the person for whom you are providing care. One of the best ways to avoid becoming overstressed is to enlist the help of other family members and friends. You should do so without feeling bad or guilty for reaching out.

Certainly some of these situations are more difficult than others. But reaching out to others can make your senior's life easier and lessen your stress.

Get other family members or close friends involved:

- **Give each person a responsibility** - even if it is small, to help spread out the tasks. Even if your brother lives 1,000 kilometres away, make it his responsibility to call your parent once a week to check in or to visit for a week each year to allow you to take your own family holiday.
- **Divide up the tasks** - have a specific family member who handles the medical aspects of your relative's care (talks with doctors, medication information, etc.), while another may be responsible for groceries/meals and another handles paying the bills. By dividing up the tasks, each person becomes more involved with the details or these tasks and can keep each other abreast of changes, issues, problems, etc.
- **Communicate with other family members** about your elderly relative. If you don't express your concerns (e.g., debilitating health, amount of time you are spending caring for them, etc.), you can't expect your other family members to know what you are thinking and feeling.
- **Don't be a control freak.** If you want to control every aspect of the care, other family members may be less apt to step in, thinking you have it all under control. They'll be less able to understand your stress level if they believe you are creating it yourself.
- **If you don't have other family members to help out,** consider joining a local caregiver support group or involving outside friends, church members or professional caregivers to share the duties.

For other tips on how to manage caregiver stress visit:

carersaustralia.com.au
caregiverstress.com





To us, it's personal

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